

SATELLITE

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NRO review(s) completed.

3 February 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: Recommendation re Fubini's Proposal

Background:

1. Fubini's memorandum for the record dictated in your office on 13 January 1964 proposes a specific plan for CIA participation in the satellite reconnaissance program. This paper gives you my candid view of the Fubini proposition as requested and proposes a course of negotiation.

Summary:

2. The real significance of Fubini's proposal is that it shows a willingness on his part to preserve a role for CIA in the satellite reconnaissance field. As a specific proposal for implementing this splendid spirit, Fubini's plan is a bad one. However, a reasonable plan in the same spirit can be advanced which should be acceptable to CIA and DOD.

3. The central problem is how to partition the satellite program. There are three basic dimensions: (a) type of satellite, (b) stage of development/operations to be carried out, or (c) specific functions to be carried out in a given program. A typical partition based on type of satellite might assign high resolution spotting systems to the Air Force and broad coverage search systems to CIA. Division according to development stage might make CIA responsible for research and development of all satellites, leaving the Air Force to launch and recover all satellites. The last dimension is closer to the present situation on CORONA, where we do the contracting and security, the Air Force has de facto technical direction, and we share the operational responsibility. Of course, one can have combinations of all these partitions, viz. we might agree to do research and development on only one type of satellite.

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4. Fubini's proposal is a combined partition with very significant liabilities. First, he proposes that CIA focus on the second generation search system, as distinct from the present CORONA. What he does not say in his memo is what he told General Carter and myself, viz. that he would give the development of all other satellite systems to General Greer. Secondly, he proposes that CIA develop such a payload to the point of several successful launches, leaving all subsequent operations to the Air Force.

5. This leaves the CIA to stand or fall on their ability to identify, sell, and develop a distinct second generation broad coverage system. In return for this opportunity, we are to abdicate the rest of the field to Air Force management. There are significant hazards in this narrow assignment. The Purcell Panel has recommended that the present CORONA be upgraded rather than a new search system begun. While that recommendation may be modified by subsequent inquiries by the Drell Committee, Fubini's plan places a high premium for CIA on a completely new system. If our best judgment should be that the right thing to do is further modify the present system, it would fall to the Air Force who would then have total responsibility for CORONA. Fubini covers this by the slogan "The capabilities of CIA must be employed", but our repeated experience has been that this is a difficult thing to carry out in the face of Air Force resistance and monopoly.

6. On the other hand, let us suppose that we are able to convince ourselves that a radically new broad coverage system does make sense. What is the mechanism for proceeding? We must sell McMillan and his staff that our ideas are sound and worthy of support. In view of McMillan's conviction that General Greer should do all satellite systems, it is predictable that this will prove very difficult. This is confirmed by McMillan's verbatim reaction to Fubini's basic plan when he first presented it to Carter, McMillan and myself on 8 January 1964: "Gene's idea represents the trade of a major development responsibility for the job of cleaning up a stinking mess (i.e., CORONA). No one now in CIA had anything to do with original CORONA success, and therefore Gene's assertion of a CIA development capability is a phony case. Furthermore, Gene is using this phony case to set CIA back up in satellite business. He, McMillan, was not prepared to go along until he was satisfied CIA has the development capabilities and considered CIA lack of responsiveness to DNRO on such a program a serious possibility." Of course, one can respond

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that McMillan will give way to a more reasonable individual seated differently in the Government. However, until that is done, I am unwilling to enter into a contract which circumscribes our jumping off place so tightly and makes us jump over a bar we have not yet cleared.

7. A workable solution in the present environment is to assign classes of satellite systems to individual agencies. General Greer has now developed a substantial understanding of high resolution spotting systems [REDACTED]

A similar competence in the broad coverage area exists in CIA, one which has been demonstrated in the CORONA program. This is not only a fact of history, it is reflected in thoughtful inquiries by the Agency into CORONA's ongoing problems and a continuing awareness of the intelligence requirements for broad coverage. On the other hand, all of our experience indicates that there is little interest or appreciation at SSO for the broad coverage requirement. My proposal is a simple one:

a. Forthwith assign responsibilities for broad coverage (search) satellite payloads to CIA and high resolution spotting systems to the Air Force. The assignment of responsibilities for developing specialized satellites, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] to be the subject of further negotiation.

In this way, successive systems can flow naturally out of present capabilities as a smooth corollary. This would place research and development responsibility for CORONA, its improvements, and its successor with the CIA.

8. The question of control of satellite operations is often raised in NSO discussions, usually in a way which suggests that this should be the exclusive responsibility of the Air Force. I have recently visited the preparation and launching facilities in both Vandenburg and Sunnyvale, and was impressed by the complete dependence of CORONA on contractor personnel from fabrication through launch. An Air Force officer does sit in the bunkhouse as an override control during launch, but the basic capability to lift into orbit resides in Douglas and Lockheed. This is even more apparent in the case of NASA launches with similar

25X1 vehicles from adjacent Vandenberg pads. [redacted] in Palo Alto convert the targeting requirements of COMOR and the SAC targeting group into tape commands at the Skunk Works in Palo Alto. When the vehicle is in orbit, they go to the satellite test center in Sunnyvale and assume responsibility for decisions affecting the payload while it is in orbit. Air Force officers on duty with STC assume a corresponding responsibility for the AGENA vehicle and recovery forces. Between them, the operation is run without conflict. When Greer [redacted] he goes to the STC and performs the same function that our people do. The question in operations is not who pours in the fuel, who mans the tracking station or who mans the recovery forces. That is a general service provided by the contractors, the Air Force and Navy for all firings from Vandenberg [redacted]

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25X1 9. The real operational role to be filled is one of taking effective responsibility for the payload during checkout launch, orbital and recovery operations. Because the development and operations are continuously overlapping, only the development team can carry the responsibility for the operational decision. This is perhaps more evident in OXCART where the concurrent development and operational activities are carried out side by side (and probably always will be) as we operate the airplane. It is one thing for an arsenal to develop a standard rifle and turn it over to the field army for operations. It is quite another thing to be responsible in real time for advanced technical experiments in space, no one of which is alike and each of which costs [redacted] I therefore conclude that CIA must play a small but central continuing role in the operational use of any system it is responsible for developing. General Greer certainly feels this way.

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Recommendation:

10. We should tell Fubini that his proposal represents a very constructive first step toward solving the problem, for which he should be commended, but that it contains several self-defeating problems which were probably not apparent to him. Rather than hopping from square to square--and running the risk of falling between--we consider it sound to assign a line of development to CIA along which it can

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roll smoothly. Because of its demonstrated record in CORONA and Greer's preoccupation with high resolution spotting systems, it seems logical to assign the responsibility for broad coverage search systems to CIA. This implies that CIA should pick up the loose reins on CORONA immediately, which it is quite prepared to do. CIA should be instructed to proceed with the improvement of this capability and be adequately supported by NRO. The assignment of operational responsibility for these very remarkable missions will remain as a working partnership between the people responsible for the payload, the vehicle, the booster, the range, and the recovery forces.

SIGNED

ALBERT D. WHEELON
Deputy Director
(Science and Technology)

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